

SECTION M– EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

M.1 BASIS FOR AWARD

The Census Bureau's source evaluation will be based on best value principles. Accordingly, award will be made to the responsible and technically acceptable Offeror whose proposal provides the greatest overall value to the Government, price and other factors considered. This best value determination will be made by comparing the value of the differences in the technical qualifications of competing offers based on their strengths, weaknesses, and risks, with differences of their price to the Government. In making this comparison, the Government is more concerned with obtaining superior technical skills and management capabilities than with making an award at the lowest overall price to the Government. However, the Government will not make an award at a significantly higher overall price to achieve slightly superior technical skills. The Offeror is advised that the technical evaluation factors are significantly more important than consideration of the price.

M.2 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

M.2.1 DISCUSSIONS

The Government reserves the right to award contracts within a technical area without discussions if the Contracting Officer determines that discussions are not necessary. Accordingly, it is **strongly suggested** that each initial offer be submitted on the most favorable price and technical terms that the Offeror can submit to the Government.

If discussions are necessary, discussions will be held with all Offerors within the competitive range for that particular technical area. This discussion period will allow the Government to clarify and discuss information provided in the written proposals, address any weaknesses and deficiencies, and gain additional information concerning the Offeror's proposal, as required. Although the Offeror may have additional personnel in attendance (either by phone or in person) at the discussion period, the key personnel shall attend these discussions. Because the U.S. Census Bureau will rely on the information provided at these discussions, it is imperative that at least one of the individuals participating be an authorized officer of the firm possessing the authority to commit the firm and its resources.

The Government reserves the right to call for discussions, proposal clarifications, and or revisions at any time as may be determined to be in the Government's best interest and in accordance with the FAR.

M.2.2 OTHER INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE FOR EVALUATION

In conducting the evaluation of the proposals, the Census Bureau reserves the right to utilize all information available at the time of evaluations. The U.S. Census Bureau may rely on information contained in its own records (such as Government audit agencies), information made available through reference checks, information available through commercial sources (such as Dun and Bradstreet Reports) and information publicly available (such as articles contained in periodicals).

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M.2.3 SITE VISITS

The Government reserves the right to visit or contact other customer sites that the Offeror is currently supporting, or previous customers who have obtained similar services prior to award of the contract. Site visits may be required to verify information provided in Offerors' proposals. Site visits, if conducted, will be taken into consideration as part of the evaluation factors set forth below. The U.S. Census Bureau will use information obtained during site visits (if any) to validate information contained in Offeror proposals.

M.3 METHOD OF EVALUATION

- a. **The Census Bureau intends to follow the formal Source Selection Procedures outlined in the U.S. Department of Commerce's Acquisition Manual. Separate technical evaluation teams will be formed for each technical area. One Source Evaluation Board will oversee and review all the results of the evaluation teams.**
- b. Proposals will be evaluated against the requirements of the solicitation and in accordance with the evaluation factors set forth to determine the Offeror's demonstrated ability to perform the services required. General statements such as "the vast resources of our nationwide company will be used to perform the services required by the Statement of Work" are not sufficient. The Offeror shall clearly address each element of the proposal as required by Section L of this solicitation. Any proposal failing to address all of the elements of Section C may be considered indicative of the Offeror's lack of understanding in response to the Government's requirements and may be considered unacceptable.
- c. The evaluation will be conducted using the evaluation factors set forth below. The Technical Evaluation Team will use the Offeror's written proposals, and if applicable, questions and answers, discussions, and any other information as stated in M.2.3.
- d. The Government reserves the right to determine the specific order and duration of individual activities as the evaluation proceeds, and may call for discussions, proposal clarifications, and revisions at any time as may be determined to be in the Government's best interests and in accordance with the FAR.

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M.4 EVALUATION FACTORS

- a. The proposals will be evaluated using the following four technical factors.

Technical Factors:

Factor 1: Past Performance and Similar Experience

Factor 2: Key Personnel

Factor 3: Technical Capability

Factor 4: Management Capability & Small Business Subcontracting Approach

Price/Cost will be evaluated separately and considered when making the best value determination.

- b. Past Performance, Similar Experience, Key Personnel, Technical Capability, Management Capability and Small Business Subcontracting Approach are referred to as the Technical Factors.
- c. The technical evaluation will include a thorough review and analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and risks of each proposal. Technical risk will be included in the final evaluation of each factor and will not be evaluated as a separate factor. In the assessment of technical risk, the Government evaluators will also consider other available information.

M.5 RELATIVE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE OF TECHNICAL FACTORS

Technical Factors 1, 2, and 3 as listed in M.4 are of equal importance. Technical Factor 4 is less important than Technical Factors 1, 2, and 3.

The combined Technical Evaluation Factors are significantly more important than price. As relative technical advantages and disadvantages become less distinct, differences in price/cost between proposals are of increased importance in determining the proposal that is the best value to government. Conversely, as differences in price/cost become less distinct, differences in relative technical advantages and disadvantages between proposals are of increased importance to the determination. The degree of importance of price/cost will increase with the degree of equality of the proposals in relation to the other factors on which selection will be based.

M.6 FACTOR 1 – Past Performance and Similar Experience

This evaluation factor is divided into two elements of equal importance.

M.6.1 – Element 1 - Similar Experience(s)

Similar experience will be evaluated on the basis of the Offeror's breadth (experience in multiple disciplines and expertise), depth (number of contracts/projects), level (degree of participation) and relevance of Offeror's experience during the last five (5) years working on research and Solicitation YA1323-08-RD-2014 – Section M, Amendment 3

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development projects similar in size, scope and complexity with the R&D 2014 requirements. The Government will determine if the Offeror's experience is similar in size, scope, and complexity to the possible areas of research and development activities described in Section C.5.

The information presented in the Offeror's written proposals, together with information from any other sources available to the Government, will provide the primary input for evaluation of this factor. The Government reserves the right to verify the specifics of prior contracts described by Offeror in the proposals.

If the Offeror has no single experience that encompasses all types of experience defined under this factor, then the Offeror may show relevant experience through a combination of projects which together show that work has been accomplished which is consistent in scope and complexity with the R&D 2014 requirement.

Note: If the experience(s) described by the Offeror as part of its proposal required subcontracting or other external resource usage, these relationships must be clearly explained. The Offeror should refer to instructions as they relate to similar experience and key personnel in Section L.

M.6.2 – Element 2 – Past Performance Survey

Evaluation of past performance will allow the Government to determine whether the Offeror consistently delivers quality services in a timely manner. Past performance information will be obtained (from the Past Performance Surveys submitted from the Offerors' customers) for contracts performed by the Offeror during the last five (5) years consistent in scope and complexity with the project. Past performance information will be obtained from references on contracts described in the Offeror's proposal. Past performance on other relevant contracts may also be obtained at the discretion of the Government. In addition to information obtained from references, the Government may use other sources of information to assess past performance, such as Government past performance databases, Inspector General reports, General Accounting Office reports, and information in the media concerning the Offeror.

The information obtained from references on contracts described in the Offeror's proposal, together with information from any other sources available to the Government, will provide the primary input for evaluation of this factor. The Government reserves the right to verify the specifics of prior contracts described by the Offeror in its proposal.

Past performance on contracts that are more technically relevant to this requirement and similar in scope will be considered more heavily than performance on contracts that are less relevant and of smaller scope.

Additionally, evaluation of past performance may include Offeror's records of providing high-quality services in a timely manner; adhering to contract schedules; administrative aspects of contract performance; overall quality, availability, and stability of assigned personnel; reasonable and cooperative behavior; commitment to and business-like concern for the interests of the customer; quality of overall program management; cost savings achieved; record of awards or performance recognition earned, and overall client satisfaction.

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If an Offeror lacks a record of relevant past performance, it will receive a neutral past performance evaluation.

M.7 FACTOR 2 - KEY PERSONNEL

Key personnel will be evaluated through information contained in the written proposal. The Key personnel include those defined by the Census Bureau in **Section H.11**, and additional key personnel the Offeror proposes to make available to the R&D 2014 project. Specifically, the Government desires a mix of Key Personnel with relevant experience in the implementation of research and development projects related to the conduct of census and surveys. A strong management team will include available personnel with combined expertise in all aspects of the R&D 2014 technical requirements, business management, and program management.

The information presented in the Offeror's proposals, together with information from any other sources available to the Government, will provide the primary input for evaluation of this factor. The Government reserves the right to verify the specifics of prior contracts described by Offeror in its proposal.

The Government will consider the following elements when evaluating the Offeror's Key Personnel:

- Education and experience guidelines provided in Section C.6;
- Research capability attainable through graduate education or demonstrated research experience;
- Years of experience and appropriateness of the skill sets of each proposed personnel to successfully perform in this contract;
- Relevancy of the proposed personnel experiences to the requirements for this contract;
- Recognition, contribution, and stature in his/her field;
- Publication record; and
- Ability of the individual to remain on the program through the life of the contract.

Those proposals that offer higher qualified personnel will receive higher consideration.

The Government reserves the right to utilize other information available to it to evaluate key personnel. For example, the Government may query contract references and other end user representatives regarding the experience of proposed Key Personnel and the quality of their performance. Other sources of information concerning Key Personnel may include technical journals, Government past performance databases, Inspector General reports, General Accounting Office reports, and information in the media concerning key personnel.

M.8 FACTOR 3 - Technical Capability

The Government will evaluate the Offerors' understanding of the Government's requirements, its understanding of the nature of the work to be performed under the prospective contract(s); Offerors' organization and technical team of staff, partners; consultants, and subcontractors to perform the work, Offerors' technical approach for fulfilling the requirements; an assessment of the likelihood that the Offeror's capabilities will enable them to meet Government

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requirements; and an assessment of any risk(s) that could potentially lead to Offeror's poor performance and could jeopardize the success of the contract.

Some examples of the aspects the Government will consider when evaluating the Offeror's general technical approach are:

- Offeror's understanding of Census Bureau programs and research needs
- Offeror's understanding of the size, scope, challenges and complexity of the challenges facing the survey research field as they relate to Census Bureau surveys and censuses;
- Experience in core competencies
- Offeror's in-depth knowledge and understanding of all applicable research and development techniques, including identification of innovations, new methodologies, and procedures, new technologies and cultural changes, and plans for enhancing to the greatest extent practical survey and census operations.
- Offeror's creativity and innovation in their approach.

M.9 FACTOR 4 – Management Capability & Small Business Subcontracting Approach

This evaluation factor is divided into two elements, as described below. Each element will be evaluated through the written proposal. Each element is considered of equal importance in evaluating this factor.

M.9.1 – Element 1 – Management Capability

Offerors will be evaluated on their proposed methods for managing large, complex surveys and censuses (see L.21.3.2. for detailed instructions for proposal preparation).

The emphasis on this element is Offeror's capabilities in the project management discipline.

The Government will consider the following elements when evaluating the Offeror's Management Capabilities:

- Offeror's understanding of the complexity of managing large, complex survey and census operations;
- Comprehensiveness and feasibility of the Offeror's proposed Project Management Plan.
- Offerors' methods for staffing, managing personnel, subcontracting plans, and Task Management plans, including, but not limited to, managing priorities, task monitoring, and decision making processes.

M.9.2 – Element 2 – Small Business Subcontracting Approach

This element will be evaluated based on the Offeror's proposed Small Business Subcontracting Plan. Emphasis will be given to the following aspects of the proposed plans:

- The Offeror's proposed small business subcontracting goals in reference to the Government small business subcontracting goal, as defined in Section L.21.3;
- The Offeror's strategy to reach their proposed goals; and
- The feasibility of the proposed strategy.

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M.10 PRICE/COST ANALYSIS

The business evaluation will assess cost and other business factors as deemed appropriate by the U.S. Census Bureau.

M.10.1 COST/PRICE EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

The proposed cost/price proposal will be evaluated based on the following:

1. Price Analysis:

TOTAL EVALUATED PRICE

For price evaluation purposes only, the Government will calculate the evaluated price by multiplying the proposed fully burdened hourly rate by the number of hours of each labor category shown below for each area proposed for all five (5) contract years. The yearly totals will be added together to get a total contract evaluated cost. These assumptions in no way bind the Government to exercise any option during the life of the contract and/or order any amount of services during the life of the contract.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION (OFF SITE)

	Estimated Hours	HOURLY RATE				
LABOR CATEGORY		Base Year	<u>Option Yr.1</u>	<u>Option Yr. 2</u>	<u>Option Yr. 3</u>	<u>Option Yr. 4</u>
Project Director	100					
Project Manager	1000					
Project Administrator	300					
Senior Subject Matter Specialist	400					
Senior Data Analyst	400					
Subject Matter Specialist	1700					
Principal Researcher	200					
Labor Economist	200					

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ASSESSMENT, PLANNING AND ANALYSIS (OFFSITE)

	HOURLY RATE					
LABOR CATEGORY	Estimated Hours	Base Year	<u>Option Yr.1</u>	<u>Option Yr. 2</u>	<u>Option Yr. 3</u>	<u>Option Yr. 4</u>
Project Director	100					
Project Manager	1000					
Project Administrator	300					
Senior Subject Matter Specialist / Researcher	400					
Senior Computer Specialist	1700					
Senior Subject Matter Analyst	400					
Management Analyst	1700					
Senior Economist	400					

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION (OFFSITE)

		HOURLY RATE				
LABOR CATEGORY	Estimated Hours	Base Year	<u>Option Yr.1</u>	<u>Option Yr. 2</u>	<u>Option Yr. 3</u>	<u>Option Yr. 4</u>
Project Director	100					
Project Manager	1000					
Project Administrator	300					
Senior Mathematical Statistician	1000					
Senior Statistical Programmer	1000					
Senior Data Analyst	500					
Principal Researcher	200					

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METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH (OFF-SITE)

	HOURLY RATE					
LABOR CATEGORY	Estimated Hours	Base Year	<u>Option Yr.1</u>	<u>Option Yr. 2</u>	<u>Option Yr. 3</u>	<u>Option Yr. 4</u>
Project Director	100					
Project Manager	1000					
Project Administrator	300					
Senior Social Scientist / Methodologist	400					
Senior Survey Methodologist / Specialist	1000					
Sampling Statistician	400					
Senior Sociolinguist	400					
Senior Cognitive Psychologist / Interviewers	200					
Translator	200					

SURVEY ENGINEERING (OFF-SITE)

	HOURLY RATE					
LABOR CATEGORY	Estimated Hours	Base Year	<u>Option Yr.1</u>	<u>Option Yr. 2</u>	<u>Option Yr. 3</u>	<u>Option Yr. 4</u>
Project Director	100					
Project Manager	1000					
Project Administrator	300					
Senior Computer Specialist	1700					
Senior Subject Matter Specialist / Researcher	400					
Senior Mathematical Statistician	400					
Senior Statistical Programmer	1000					

2. **Price Realism:** A realism assessment will be accomplished and the Government may use the results of cost/price realism analysis to adjust the Offeror's proposal to a most probable cost to the Government. The intent of this assessment is to determine whether the estimated proposed price/cost elements are realistic for the work to be performed;

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reflect a clear understanding of the requirements; and are consistent with the approach described in the Offeror's technical proposal. This may include information from a government auditing agency, Government technical personnel, and other sources. The Offeror is placed on notice that any proposals that are unrealistic in terms of technical commitment or unrealistically low in their price proposal will be deemed reflective of an inherent lack of technical competence or indicative of failure to comprehend the complexity and risk of contract requirements, and may be grounds for rejection of the proposal.

3. **Price Reasonableness:** The Offeror is expected to establish a reasonable price relationship between all price elements listed in Section B. An evaluation of the Offeror's price proposals will be made to determine if they are realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a clear understanding of the requirements, and are consistent with the technical proposal. Reasonableness determinations will be made by determining if competition exists, by comparing proposed prices with established commercial or GSA price schedules, by evaluating fees, and/or by comparing proposed prices with the Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE).
4. **Price Risk:** Price risk refers to any aspect of the Offeror's proposals that could have significant negative price consequences for the Government. Proposals will be assessed to identify potential price risk. Where price risk is assessed, it may be described in quantitative terms or used as a best-value discriminator.

Although consideration of the price/cost is less important than the technical evaluation factors, it will not be ignored. The degree of importance of the proposed price/cost will increase with the degree of equality of the proposals in relation to the other factors on which selection is to be based.

M.10.2 RISKS ATTRIBUTABLE TO COST/PRICE

1. Risks attributable to cost/price are defined as any aspect of an Offeror's proposal that could result in adverse performance under the contract as a result of the prices proposed by the Offeror. Each proposal will be assessed to identify risks attributable to the prices proposed. Where price risk is assessed, it may be described in quantitative terms or used as a best value discriminator.
2. The Government will reject as non-responsive any proposal that is materially unbalanced in terms of prices for basic and option-year quantities. An unbalanced proposal is one that incorporates prices significantly less than cost for some items and/or prices that are significantly overstated for other items.

M.10.3 OTHER BUSINESS FACTORS

The information contained in each Offeror's Cost and Other Business Factors Proposal will be used to determine each Offeror's responsibility, in accordance with FAR Part 9, and business capability to perform. **The evaluation of Other Business Factors is critical to the determination of responsibility; consequently, they will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis.** The information requested by Section L of this RFP, together with information that may be available from Government agencies and from non-Government organizations will be

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considered in the evaluation of Other Business factors. The following will be part of the evaluation:

1. Financial Condition and Capability. The Offeror's current financial status and other business information will be evaluated to determine if the Offeror has the necessary tenacity, capacity, capability, and credit to successfully perform this contract.

M.11 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Proposals shall be prepared in accordance with the instructions in Section L. If a proposal is not prepared in accordance with Section L, it will be "Non-Responsive."

Trade-offs and risks should be clear throughout the proposal, and mitigation strategies presented proactively.

M.12 EVALUATION SUPPORT

The Offeror is advised that the Government may utilize outside Contractors and/or Consultants to assist in the evaluation of proposals. These outside Contractors will have access to any and all information contained in the Offeror's proposals, and will be subject to appropriate conflict of interest, standards of conduct, and confidentiality restrictions.